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## FIFTY YEARS OF HOWARD UNIVERSITY\*

### PART II

The crisis in the financial affairs of the University, already mentioned, was the natural result of over confidence in the readiness of philanthropists to rally to the aid of a needy cause. This disappointment, however, was a valuable experience, for it became clear that philanthropists were not inclined to grant very generous aid to an institution established under the patronage of the Federal Government, especially in the face of the frequent and insistent appeals from less fortunate institutions serving the same people. It was an incorrect assumption, however, that the United States Treasury was paying the current expenses, for it must be remembered that no part of the original grants of the Freedmen's Bureau was or could be invested as permanent endowment or used for salaries, equipment or maintenance; and that during the first decade of the existence of the University no public funds were appropriated for these purposes. In spite of this, its reputation as a ward of the United States Government was, to its great disadvantage, accepted by philanthropists as justified.

When, in 1873, the Freedmen's Bureau was abolished, General Howard resigned from the presidency of the University to enter the army. Not desiring to accept his resignation immediately, however, the trustees granted him an indefinite leave of absence.<sup>1</sup> At the same meeting it was decided to revive the office of Vice-President, which had been discontinued and John M. Langston, then Dean of the Howard Law School, was elected to that position. "It had

\* Part I of *Fifty Years of Howard University* appeared in the April Number of the JOURNAL OF NEGRO HISTORY.

<sup>1</sup> The resignation was accepted the following year after General Howard had been appointed to the command of the Department of the Columbia.

been hoped," says one, "that the experiment of placing an able colored man in this high position would stimulate his own race and the minds of white philanthropists to sustain the institution in its perilous struggles." But the lack of funds continued. Convinced that a permanent president must be at once secured, Mr. Langston resigned the vice-presidency in 1875.

An unfortunate combination of conditions that might well baffle the ablest administrators then obtained. The outlook was so gloomy that it was difficult to find a person both capable and willing to succeed to the position left vacant. Upon Mr. Langston's resignation, Reverend George Whipple, Secretary of the American Missionary Association was elected president but after due consideration declined the honor. On December 16, 1875, Edward P. Smith, a trustee of the University and a member of the Executive Committee, was elected. After serving a few weeks he departed on an expedition for the American Missionary Association to the west coast of Africa where he died, June 15, 1875. Meanwhile Senator Pomeroy acted as chairman of the board of trustees and Professor Frederick W. Fairfield served efficiently as acting president, having supervision over matters purely educational. This was the period of the most rigid retrenchment in expenses.

But Howard was to find a way out of this difficulty and move onward. The second epoch in the history of the University began when, on April 25, 1876, the Reverend Doctor William W. Patton was elected president. His administration, lasting over a term of twelve years, was a period of recovery and consolidation, and an era of good feeling. Dr. Patton came to his task equipped with just the qualities needed at that time. He possessed intense sympathy for the ideals for which the University stands; sufficient business ability to keep its finances safe; and a personality that inspired respect, confidence and love.

Carefully administering the affairs of the institution, Dr. Patton was able to restore confidence in the minds of the public and of Congress. This accomplished, he was

justified in arguing for federal aid on the ground that through this means alone was it possible to make the best use of the large and expensive plant which the Government had already provided. The result was that for the year beginning July 1, 1879, Congress appropriated \$10,000 toward current expenses. Since that date appropriations have been regularly made and have so increased that the institution now receives from the United States Government an annual allowance of over \$100,000.

It was during the administration of Dr. Patton that Howard University rounded out its organization and developed as a university. Previously, however, the various departments particularly had made interesting history. An active faculty was organized in the Medical School, June 17, 1867, and the first session opened in November, 1868, in the same rented building already referred to as housing the first academic classes of the University.<sup>2</sup> Here lectures were given in the evening to a class of eight students. The

<sup>2</sup> It was realized at the beginning that a hospital in connection with the department was an absolute necessity. This was provided for through the relationship established between the Medical School and Freedmen's Hospital. The Campbell Hospital, as it was formerly called, was located, at the close of the war, at what is now the northeast corner of Seventh Street and Florida Avenue. Prior to that time it was directly connected with the War Department. In 1865, in connection with the various hospitals and camps for freedmen in the several States, it was placed under the Freedmen's Bureau. In 1869 it was moved to buildings expressly erected for it by the Bureau upon ground belonging to the University on Pomeroy Street, including and adjacent to the site of the Medical Building. This new home consisted of four large frame buildings of two stories each to be used as wards; and in addition the Medical Building itself, a brick structure of four and one half stories, quite commodious and well arranged with lecture halls and laboratories for medical instruction. Dr. Robert Reyburn, who was chief medical officer of the Freedmen's Bureau from 1870 to 1872 was surgeon in chief, from 1868 to 1875. He was followed in order by Drs. Gideon S. Palmer, Charles B. Purvis, Daniel H. Williams, Austin M. Curtis and Wm. H. Warfield. Dr. Warfield, the present incumbent was appointed in 1901 and is the first graduate of the Howard University Medical School to hold this position. Only the first two named, however, were white. In 1907 the hospital was moved to its new home in the reservation lying on the south side of College Street between Fourth and Sixth Streets, the property of the University.

"The new Freedmen's Hospital was then built at a cost of \$600,000. It has the great advantage of being designed primarily for teaching purposes, as

permanent Medical Building was then in the course of erection. Under an able faculty and with excellent facilities it is not surprising that the Medical School has been able to maintain a very high standard of efficiency and that it now meets fully the requirements of the Association of American Medical Colleges.

The Law Department was organized October 12, 1868, with Mr. John M. Langston<sup>3</sup> as professor and dean. In December of the same year, A. G. Riddle was associated with him on the faculty and the school began actual instruction on January 6, 1869.<sup>4</sup> During the years of the financial difficulties of the University, however, the Law School passed through a distressing experience. The attendance of the students was uncertain, falling off rapidly when the Freedmen's Bureau passed out of existence; for many of the students who were employees serving the Bureau during the day attended lectures at night. These left in large numbers when the Bureau closed, depriving the Law School of a part of its estimated income. Losing thus this revenue, this department was either actually suspended or barely

practically all the patients admitted are utilized freely for instruction. The hospital has about three hundred beds and contains two clinical amphitheatres, a pathological laboratory, clinical laboratory and a room for X-Ray diagnostic work and X-Ray therapy. The Medical Faculty practically constitutes the Hospital Staff.'—*Howard University Catalog*, 1916-17, p. 163; 1917-18, p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Langston was graduated at Oberlin with the degree of A.B. in 1852 and in theology in 1853. He studied law privately and was admitted to practice in Ohio in 1854. In April, 1867, he was appointed general inspector of the Freedmen's Bureau, serving for two years, during which he travelled extensively through the South. From 1877 to 1885 he was Minister to Haiti and from 1885 to 1887 President of the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute. He was elected to Congress from the Fourth District of Virginia and seated, September 23, 1890, after a contest. He died November 15, 1897, at his home near Howard University.

<sup>4</sup> For a number of years after its organization the school held its sessions in the main building of the University. Later a more convenient location was secured in the building occupied by the Second National Bank on Seventh Street. After remaining there for a considerable period, it moved to Lincoln Hall, at Ninth and D Streets, where it remained until 1887 when the building was destroyed by fire. The authorities then decided to purchase for the department a permanent home conveniently located and adequate to its accommodation. As a result the present Law Building on Fifth Street, opposite the District Court House, was purchased, and fitted up for school purposes.

kept open with a single teacher and a handful of students. Mr. Langston retained his position as dean under the then trying conditions until 1874, when he resigned.

The department gradually recovered with the mending fortunes of the University under President Patton and as a result of the demand in the District of Columbia for a school of law admitting students without racial restrictions. In 1881 B. F. Leighton was appointed to the deanship of this department, a position which he has to the present time filled with marked success. He took charge of the department when it was barely existing and brought it to its present position of usefulness. For many years he had associated with him A. A. Birney one of the most distinguished members of the District of Columbia bar. From that reconstruction of the department dates the period of its real growth. In 1881 these two professors lectured to a class of seven students, five of whom were graduated at the close of the session. Since that time the courses have been broadened in keeping with the advancing standards of legal study, the student body has increased ten fold and the faculty has been strengthened in accordance with these demands.

Although the Theological Department was the first in the plan of the founders of the University, it was not put into operation until January 6, 1868, when D. B. Nichols and E. W. Robinson, both clergymen, began without pay, to give theological instruction twice a week to a number of men already accredited as preachers and others looking forward to that work. Shortly afterwards, at the request of the Board of Trustees, a course of study was drawn up and adopted. Lectures in accordance with this plan were started immediately thereafter by General Eliphalet Whittlesey.<sup>5</sup> It was not until 1871, however, that the Theolog-

<sup>5</sup> General Eliphalet Whittlesey was Colonel of the 46th United States Colored Regiment in 1865. He had been on the staff of General Howard during the last year of the campaign through the South and was brevetted Brigadier General at the close of the war. He was Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau and later Adjutant General under General Howard at Wash-

ical Department was officially announced by the University as actively in operation. In this announcement, Dr. John B. Reeve is named as dean, supported by a faculty of four lecturers and a roster of twelve students. Three years later in 1874, seven of these twelve students received their certificates of graduation.

The Theological Department has always been barred from the use of United States funds for its current expenses and has, therefore, depended upon scholarships and special contributions made by individuals and philanthropic organizations. The American Missionary Association has always been its chief support since the crisis of 1873. Because of the financial stress under which the University was working at that time, the first act of Dr. Lorenzo Wescott, the new dean appointed in 1875, was to make arrangements to have the Presbytery of Washington assume the responsibility of the school. This appeal was favorably acted upon and a committee of the Presbytery took charge of the affairs of the department in December, 1875. This step was rendered necessary because, from 1872 to 1874 the American Missionary Association, on account of financial embarrassment, was compelled, temporarily, to withdraw its support. In November, 1877, this organization was again able to resume part of the responsibility and the bodies worked in harmony until June, 1887, when the American Missionary Association was again ready to bear the entire expense.<sup>6</sup>

ington. He assisted in the selection of the site for the University, was the first professor in the College Department and organized the Department of Theology.

Reverend Danforth B. Nichols, whose name has appeared frequently in this sketch, was, at the close of the war, engaged in missionary work among the "contrabands" who tilled the abandoned lands just across the Potomac from Washington. When Howard University was founded he was one of the most active and enthusiastic workers for the successful launching of the venture. Beside being a founder, a trustee and a professor, he received the degree of M.D. with the first class graduated by its medical department.

<sup>6</sup> While the Presbytery was in charge the department received a gift of \$5,000 from Mrs. Hannah S. Toland. In 1879 Reverend J. G. Craighead became dean of the department and filled the position until his resignation in 1891. During his administration the department received \$5,000 from the estate of Wm. E. Dodge of New York. On October 1, 1883, the treasurer of

Dr. Patton resigned in May, 1889, but consented to continue in office until the end of the year or until his successor should be elected. The selection of his successor was made in November and Dr. Patton retired, hoping to rest and do literary work. He died, however, on the last day of the year 1889. On November 15, 1889, the trustees elected the Reverend Doctor Jeremiah E. Rankin<sup>7</sup> to the presidency, taking him from the pastorate of the First Congregational Church of Washington. His term of office extended through thirteen years, a period of slow but steady growth.

Under President Rankin other changes were made in the course of the development of the University. At the close of the session in 1899 the University altered its policy with reference to the work of training teachers. To this end the work of the Normal Department, at first provided for this purpose, was reorganized as the pedagogical department of the college under the deanship of Professor Lewis B. Moore who had come to the faculty five years prior to this time from the University of Pennsylvania, where he had pursued graduate studies and obtained the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. After several years of growth the department was designated as the Teachers College and given academic rank with the College of Arts and Sciences. When the Normal Department was discontinued the English Department was established to care for those who wished to pursue the common branches without professional aim. In 1903, it was merged with the newly established Commercial Department under Dean George W. Cook.

It was during this administration that with funds obtained as private donations the permanent residence for the

the University was authorized to pay the American Missionary Association \$15,000, "out of moneys due from the United States as compensation for University land taken for the reservoir," or such part as might be requisite to complete the endowment of the "Stone Professorship" in the Theological Department. This amount was added to a fund of \$25,000 which came from the estate of Daniel P. Stone, of Boston, Massachusetts, upon the fulfillment of the term of the gift.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Rankin was a writer and poet of note, his most famous production being the hymn, "God be with you till we meet again."



president and the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel were erected, the former costing approximately \$20,000 and the latter \$22,000. The chapel is a memorial to the one whose name it bears, Andrew E. Rankin, the brother of President Rankin and the deceased husband of Mrs. H. T. Cushman of Boston, a generous donor toward its erection.

Because of failing health Doctor Rankin resigned in 1903. Reverend Teunis N. Hamlin, pastor of the Church of the Covenant, Washington, District of Columbia, and the president of the board of trustees, served as acting president for a short time pending the selection of a permanent incumbent. The Reverend Doctor John Gordon, the president of Tabor College in Iowa was selected for the presidency and was formally inaugurated in 1904. It was hoped that the incoming president would infuse new life into the institution, for the occasion demanded a successful administrator, an efficient educator and a man able to command increased financial support for the institution. As Doctor Gordon had none of these qualities, it soon became evident that he would be able to accomplish little of benefit to the University. He failed entirely to understand its mission and its ideals. Serious friction between the president on the one hand and the faculty and students on the other grew to such proportions that Dr. Gordon, after a term of office covering a little over two years, resigned.

After an examination of available material in the search for a suitable man for this position, the trustees were happy in the selection of the Reverend Doctor Wilbur P. Thirfield<sup>8</sup> who accepted the offer and took up the duties of president in 1906. He was inaugurated November 15, 1907, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the founding

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Thirfield received his A.M. degree from Ohio Wesleyan in 1879. He studied theology at Boston University, graduating with the degree of S.T.B. in 1881. He entered the ministry in the M. E. Church in 1878. As the first president of Gammon Theological Seminary, Atlanta, Georgia, from 1883 to 1899 he secured endowment for that institution to the amount of \$600,000. He was called to the presidency of Howard after several years of successful service first as General Secretary of the Epworth League and later as General Secretary of the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Educational Society.

of the institution. With this ceremony began an infusion of new life into Howard University. Advantage of this occasion was taken to introduce the institution concretely to a group of notables who had hitherto known of it only in a casual way. And having once brought the institution to the attention of the world, President Thirkield never allowed the world to forget it.

With keen insight he realized at the very beginning of his term of office that the great and basic need of the University was material expansion. He saw the need of a more extensive plant with modern equipment and served by a larger faculty. With characteristic energy he sought to bring the University into a still closer alliance with the Federal Government. So successfully was the case presented that during his administration of six years he succeeded in raising the annual Congressional appropriation for current expenses from less than \$50,000 in 1906 to over \$100,000 in 1912. The pressing need for facilities in the teaching of the sciences was met by the erection in 1910 of a science hall from special appropriations amounting to \$80,000.<sup>9</sup> In 1909, the Carnegie Library was erected. This building was the gift of Mr. Andrew Carnegie and cost \$50,000.

About this time the improvement of the dormitories was begun by the installation of adequate systems of sanitary plumbing and electric lights. By arrangement with Freedmen's Hospital the heating and lighting plant was enlarged at a cost of approximately \$100,000 to such capacity that steam and current were supplied to all the University buildings. In addition to these improvements in housing and equipment, the grounds were improved and beautified in accordance with a definite scheme.<sup>10</sup> To provide for the

<sup>9</sup> This building was dedicated as "Science Hall" but by vote of the trustees the name was changed to "Thirkield Hall" in honor of President Thirkield when the latter resigned in 1912.

<sup>10</sup> Much of the credit for the improvements to grounds and buildings is due to the experience and business acumen of Professor George W. Cook who became secretary and business manager in 1908. Professor Cook has enjoyed an extensive and unique connection with the University from his matriculation in the Preparatory Department in 1873 to the present. He is a graduate of

constantly growing work in technical and industrial branches the Hall of Applied Sciences was built in 1913 at a cost of \$25,000 thus releasing the old Spaulding Hall for other purposes. A special department of music under Miss Lulu Vere Childers was established in 1909 and given a building in 1916.

Possibly the most striking result of the educational awakening under President Thirkield was the rapid growth of the College Department. In 1876 for example, the roster of the department shows thirty-five students and four graduates. In 1907, forty years later, the corresponding figures were, seventy-five and eight, a gain of about one hundred per cent in forty years or two and a half per cent a year. In 1911 these figures had grown to two hundred and forty-three, and thirty-one respectively, a gain during the period of six years covered by this administration, of about two hundred and forty per cent in students and nearly three hundred per cent in graduates. This is approximately a gain per year of forty per cent in enrollment and forty-eight per cent in graduates. While much of this remarkable growth is due to the general awakening of the University, yet no small part of the credit belongs to the inspiration of Professor Kelly Miller who became Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in 1907 near the beginning of the period under consideration. Through his efforts and reputation as a writer the claims of the University and the College of Arts and Sciences were brought to the attention of aspiring youth throughout the country.<sup>11</sup> Upon the

three departments and holds the degrees of A.B., A.M., LL.B. and LL.M. He has been dean of the Normal, the English and the Commercial Departments successively. Since 1908 he has been secretary and business manager of the University.

<sup>11</sup> Professor Miller is a product of Howard and one of her most distinguished sons. He was graduated from Preparatory Department in 1882 and from College in 1886 after which he pursued advanced studies at Johns Hopkins University. He is one of the most conspicuous publicists of the race, being the author of several books and numerous pamphlets, beside making frequent contributions to periodicals, both in America and abroad. His most important books are *Race Adjustment* and *Out of the House of Bondage*. *The Disgrace of Democracy*, an open letter to President Wilson, published in 1917, has been pronounced one of the most important documents produced by the great war.

resignation of Dr. Thirkield to become Bishop of the Methodist Church in 1912, the Reverend Doctor Stephen M. Newman was chosen as the head of the university. He has served in that position for five years.<sup>12</sup>

Serviceable as have been many of the educators connected with Howard University it has had and still has many problems. Its chief difficulty, however, is a financial one. Although it is impossible to figure out how the University could have succeeded without the aid of the United States Government, this connection of the institution has been in some respects a handicap. National aid seems to have permanently excluded the institution from the circle of the beneficiaries of those great philanthropic agencies which have played such a prominent part in the support of education during the last half century. With the exception of the Theological Department, which receives no part whatever of the Congressional appropriation, the income to the institution from benevolent sources has played but a minor part in its development. On the other hand, the United States Government has never appropriated sufficient funds to maintain the University as a first class institution. The present appropriation of \$100,000 a year falls far short of what the school needs to function properly. It seems, therefore, that the United States Government, should adequately support the institution and make its appropriations legally permanent.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Newman was graduated from Bowdoin College, the alma mater of General Howard, in 1867, with the A.B. degree, receiving the A.M. in 1870 and D.D. in 1877. He studied theology at Andover, finishing in 1871. He served as pastor in Taunton, Massachusetts, Ripon, Wisconsin and the First Congregational Church of Washington, District of Columbia. He was president of Eastern College, Fort Royal, Virginia, 1908-9, and Kee Mar College for Women, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1909-11. He is a member of a number of learned societies and a distinguished pulpit orator.

<sup>13</sup> President Taft considered the support of the University a national obligation. In his address at the commencement exercises, May 26, 1909, he said, in part:

"Everything that I can do as an executive in the way of helping along the University I expect to do. I expect to do it because I believe it is a debt of the people of the United States, it is an obligation of the Government of the United States, and it is money constitutionally applied to that which

Some remarks about the general policy of Howard University may be enlightening. The idea of racial representation among the administrative officers and faculty is indicated by the fact that membership in a particular race has never been considered a qualification for any position in the University. For many years the board of trustees has had persons of both races as members. No colored man has served a regular term as president, however, unless we include the short experience of Professor Langston already referred to. The treasurer has always been white but the office of secretary has been filled by members of both races. Neither the Theological nor the Medical School has had a Negro as dean although Dr. Charles B. Purvis was elected to that office in the latter in 1900 but declined it.

The faculties of all departments are mixed, the proportion of Negroes growing as available material from which to choose becomes more abundant. The policy of maintaining mixed faculties, however, is not dictated entirely by the lack of men and women of color competent to fill all positions on the faculty; for today the supply of such material is adequate. It seems that the governing body considers it in the best interest of the University to preserve the racial mixture in the offices and faculties in order that the students may receive the peculiar contribution of both races and that the institution may have its interests concretely connected with those of the dominant race.

Whether or not Howard has amply justified its existence during its first half century; whether its ideals have been the best for the race whose interests it primarily serves; whether its administrative policies have been wise—these are questions whose answers lie outside the scope of this sketch. As institutions of learning go, fifty years is a short time upon which to base conclusions. It is a period of beginnings. With schools of the character of Howard, with its peculiar duties to perform and its peculiar prob-

shall work out in the end the solution of one of the greatest problems that God has put upon the people of the United States.”

lems to solve in a field entirely new, these fifty years make up a period of experiment. Whatever the future relative to this educational experiment may be, Howard has given to America nearly four thousand graduates from its various departments most of whom are now doing the class of work in all fields of endeavor which demand trained minds, broad human sympathy and the spirit of service.

DWIGHT O. W. HOLMES.